4: Hobley G-5 (ca. 1900) 1902 FL11 Luo FL11

CHAPTER III.

Nilotic Tribes of Kavirondo.

101 The generic name used of these peoples by themselves is Ja-Luo. The Bantu Kavirondo people call them Awa-Nyoro. A very common term for them is Wa-Nife.

231 241 361 *Modes of subsistence.*—They all live by agriculture. They reside in fixed villages of from ten to fifty huts. Nearly all the villages are surrounded by euphorbia hedges; formerly many villages had mud and occasionally stone walls, but this custom has died out. They breed cattle, sheep, goats, and fowls.

[224] 226 *Hunting and fishing.*—They dig pitfalls for elephants and also spear elephants. They catch large quantities of fish in the Lake Victoria Nyanza by means of large conical wicker traps "*dema*." The process is as follows:—They have two enormously long ropes; one end of each rope is secured on shore, and the ropes are then paid out into the lake, one rope floats on the surface and from it hangs a fringe of papyrus stalks; the other rope is a ground rope, and is weighted with stones, and the two ropes are connected at intervals. By means of canoes these ropes are gradually brought round in a semi-circle the size of which gradually decreases. The fish rush shorewards to escape from the drawing in of the net, and rush into the mouth of the big wicker traps which are placed in a row in the shallow water near the shore. At the same time the women walk up and down dragging smaller meshed traps in which they collect myriads of tiny fish the size of a sardine. They fish a great deal at night by torchlight. They state that they got the best hauls of fish after rain; in the dry season they catch [824] comparatively few. Rafts of ambatch wood are used for laying out the net (ambatch is a very light spongy wood growing on the lake shore; it has a prickly [438] bark). They split and dry large quantities of fish and carry it inland from the lake for considerable distances to sell for grain.

227 501 Lines and hooks are also used to a certain extent by the Nyakach people and others. The people bordering the lake possess a few dug-out canoes and also a few of the sewn canoes bought from Baganda or Basoga.

491 *Bridges.*—They build rough bridges of timber across the rivers when in flood, but not suspension bridges like the North Kavirondo.

264 252 *Cooking, etc.*—They cook in earthen pots inside their huts, and also in the verandah of the huts. All cooking is done by women. The food is served up in little baskets. The father eats with his sons; they generally eat in a little separate hut with open sides built for the purpose. Women eat separately and inside the house.

372 *Fire.*—They know the use of firesticks but rarely need them, as they can always obtain a glowing ember from one or other of their neighbours.

[Pp. 11-25 not processed]

5: Hobley G-5 (ca. 1900) 1903 FL11 Luo FL11

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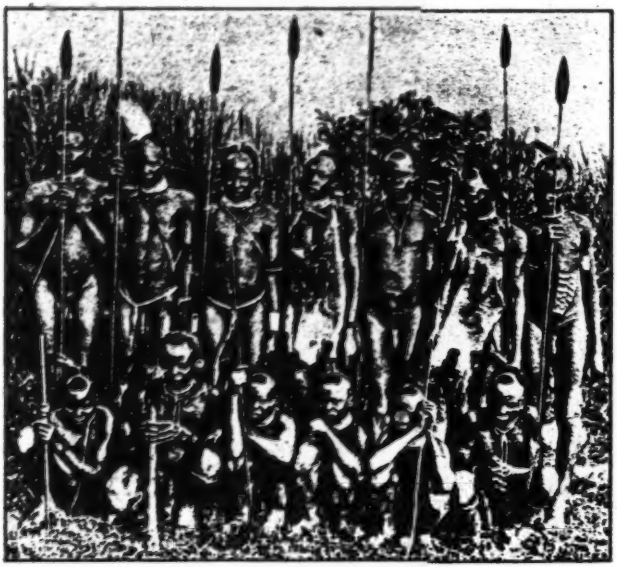

Koromojo Warriors.

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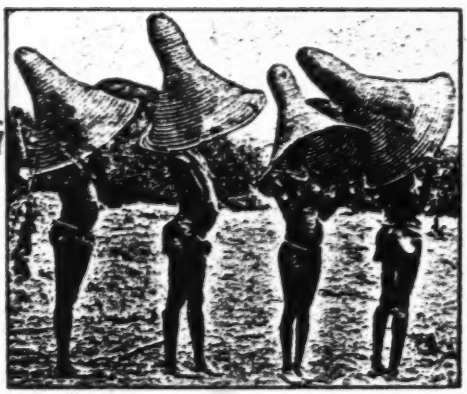

Fisherwomen; Kisumu.

Karungu Warriors (Ja-Luo).

6: Dobbs G-5 (no date)1927 FL11 Luo FL11

FISHING IN THE KAVIRONDO GULF, LAKE VICTORIA.

By C. M. Dobbs.

History of the Industry.

228 Although fishing by natives along the shores of the Gulf has been carried on from time immemorial, it was only in 1905 that the fishing industry proper was started by Mr. Aarup, a Norwegian, who found by experience the best size and kind of nets to use.

227 Mr. Aarup, who was almost blind, appears to have done a lot of pioneer work in the industry, and definitely proved that the best mesh was what is known as the 5 inch. This gives a mesh of about 2 inches square. At first shoemakers' twine was made into nets locally, but this was not successful partly owing to the inferior lasting qualities of the twine and partly owing to the slipping of the knots which allowed the fish to escape. Trials were also made with cotton nets of thicker thread. These nets however took no Carp (Ngege and 227 Mbiru) but caught Kisinga (Fwani). Subsequently nets were obtained 439 from Messrs. Wm. Barbour, Lisbourn, Ireland, and these were found so successful that they ousted all the locally made articles and are the only sort used at present. *These nets are sold in the Kisumu Bazaar at a price of Shs. 17/- to 18/- and are 100 yards long, 5 inch mesh and 26 mesh deep, 35 twine three ply. They are of a drab colour and the thread is very fine. White and tanned nets are useless. Trials were made with thicker twine (No. 20) but the catches were small.

The average life of a net is said to be about 20 days, but in the hands of Europeans they have a longer life and sometimes last up to two or three months unless they meet with accidents as when a crocodile gets entangled in them.

In 1921 when the industry was more flourishing than it is to-day up to 20,000 nets were imported annually from Ireland.

Restrictions:

228 The use of nets with a mesh of under 1 inch square is forbidden by law. Trawling is also forbidden except in water of 16 feet and over, and at a distance of not less than a quarter of a mile from the shore; this means that trawlers cannot be used in the Gulf as it is all very shallow.

* A large number of nets are also supplied to the Kisumu Bazaar by Messrs. Joseph Gundry & Co., Bridport. There is also a certain demand for White Nets.—*Editor.*

228 Kadimu, and Karachonya are the best fishing grounds. Fewer fish are said to be caught during the full moon and the takes are greater when the nights are dark and rainy.

The boats put out 10 to 20 nets each, *i.e.*, 1,000 to 2,000 yards. During the building of the Eldoret Railway one European who supplied fish to the labourers manipulated up to 8,000 yards of nets.

227 The 5 to 5½ inch mesh takes the Ngege, Mbiru, Mumi, Kamongo, Seu, Suma, and sometimes Sira. Occasionally a net of a 3 inch mesh 228 is used and this takes the Ningu, Sira, and Osoga.

These nets run on a coir rope top and bottom. The top is supported by corks and the bottom weighted with iron rings. They only catch fish while drifting and any check through catching on an obstruction will render them useless. The nets are often damaged by floating islands, boats, and crocodiles.

FISHING CENTRES:

There are three Indian fishing villages in the Gulf, at Seme, Asembo, and Nanga The last is only three miles south of Kisumu and is the only one near enough to supply fish for the Nairobi market.

MARKETING AND COST:

228 The fish for the Nairobi market are brought in by natives in sacks on Sundays, Mondays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays. They are cleaned 435 by Kavirondo women under a tree on the Lae shore near the station and are packed in ice and despatched to Nairobi by the 2-25 p.m. train. The Kavirondo women obtain the entrails as their perquisites and the Indian who superintends takes the gills which appear to be regarded as a delicacy and are extracted before the fish are packed. The fish are packed in ice in large chests The ice costs 18 cents a pound and one pound is required for each fish. The freight to Nairobi is Shs 3/50 per 100 lbs. Together with the other incidental expenses it costs about 25 cents to send a fish to Nairobi. When the fish are plentiful the usual price is 25 cents a fish in Kisumu market.

ADVERSE TIMES FOR FISHING.

228 The months April to August are not good fishing months and during these months the natives entirely give up fishing in the Lake with drag nets and confine themselves almost entirely to catching fish in the river weirs (Kek).

SPAWNING:

136 Most of the Lake fish spawn in May, June and July. Carp (Ngege and Mbiru) are plentiful during the other nine months. The carp (Kavirondo Ngege) spawn in shallow water with sandy bottom at a depth of 3 to 5 ft., and are thus immune from capture by nets which cannot be used in such shallow spots. They do not spawn in the Gulf except in rare cases but choose the spawning

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BASKET TRAPS.

1. Angu, used by women.
2. Angu, used by men.
3. Musati.
4. Sienyu.

[p. 100A]

Possible Reasons for Decline:

228 The decline in the industry appears to be due to three main factors:—

(a) Fewer fish in the Kaviscndo Gulf than formerly.
(b) Decline in retail prices giving less profit.
(c) Poverty of the fishermen.

In regard to (c) it may be remarked that during the years of high retail prices many wealthy merchants, Goans and Europeans, were engaged in fishing. These have since withdrawn and the class now carrying on the work usually have to buy nets and boats on credit or pay heavy interest on borrowed money, destroying the fishers' small profit and causing more and more to abandon fishing"

It is generally admitted that the catches of fish are less than they were. In the early years the average catch is estimated to have been over 25 fish per 100 yards of net while the boats operated at only about a mile from shore. In later years the catch fell to 5 per net and to get these the boats have to go from 12 to 15 miles out. The number of boats has also fallen off. At the height of the industry's prosperity there were 150 boats working on an average 10 nets per boat. Some boats worked as much as 20 to 25 nets.

Native Methods of Capture: Nets.

226 Turning now to the methods employed by the ordinary natives
227 living along the Lake shores we find that fish are caught by drag nets, weirs, traps, harpoons, long lines and to a very small extent with fishing rods. The drag nets used are made of papyrus stems fastened close together and are about 5 ft. deep. They are made in two sizes, the larger size being called by the Jaluo "Gogo" and the smaller "Ogoda." One end of the net is towed out by men in canoes some distance into the Lake and is taken round in a half circle so as to enclose a considerable area of water. The two ends are then drawn towards the shore so that the net brings in with it any fish that have been enclosed. When it is fairly close in men wade into the water with long baskets (Dholuo, Aungs) and capture the fish in these. These baskets as a form of trap made on much the same principle as a lobster pot and consist of a large cone of basket work about 6 ft. long with a smaller cone inside it pointing in the same direction. The inner cone is open at the end so that when a fish enters at the wide mouth of the basket it swims through the hole at the end of the inner cone and gets imprisoned in the space between the two cones.

Basket Traps, Portable and Stationary.

227 A smaller form of Aungs is used by women, called Aungs Ketenge. There are two varieties of this, one with the double cone and one with only a single cone. When using the double cone ones they place three

227 or four in a line on the bottom. They then go some distance in front and frighten the fish into the traps. The single cone traps are used by the women in a different way. They hold the baskets in both hands with the wide part facing towards them and wade backwards in shallow water drawing the baskets along the bottom towards them. When the fish enter the basket they raise it out of the water in a perpendicular position. The following fish are caught by this means: Nyawino, Nders, Ningu, and Akungu (eels). The Ningu is not caught in rivers during May, June and July as it goes to the Lake then presumably to spawn.

BASKET TRAPS USED AT WEIRS.

226 227 Enormous fish weirs (Dholuo, Kek) are a feature of the rivers of Kavirondo. Some of these are built of wood and some of stones and extend right across the rivers from bank to bank. At intervals in the weir there are gaps and basket traps (Dholuo, Musathi) are used on the upper side of these holes to catch the fish as they pass through upstream. The Musathi are similar in principle to the double coned Aungs, gut are made of reeds fastened together longitudinally, while all types of Aungs are plaited.

PORTABLE TRAPS.

Another form of basket fish trap is the Sienyu. This is also a conical basket with a hole at the top or narrow end. The native using it wades along in shallow water pushing it down at intervals on to the bottom of the lake or river. If a fish happens to be imprisoned it is heard splashing inside and the native puts his arm through the top hole and pulls it out. The Sienyu is also made of reeds fastened together longitudinally.

STATIONARY TRAPS, BAITED.

In addition to the foregoing there is another kind of basket trap used called Omuongo, which is almost identical with a European lobster pot and used with bait and in the same way.

FISHING SPEARS.

226 411 Fish are sometimes harpooned by natives wading in the water. The harpoon used is narrow and has no barb and is called by the Jaluo Bodthi. Mumi and Kamongo are speared in this way.

The natives of Mohuru are said to go out in canoes on moonlight nights with grass torches and harpoon the fish.

FISHING WITH ROD AND LINES.

226 227 Fishing with rod and line is indulged in principally as an amusement and by juveniles. Long rods made from a tree called Poo are used by men. Hooks (Dholuo, Oloo) are bought in the bazaar. The bait used is a sort of worm (Dholuo, Oniambo) found in the mud. Mumi (barbel) are caught in this way. The line is made from

papyrus fibre. Small rods made from a tree called Osire are used by children. A dried piece of mtama stalk is used as a float. Nyawino, Nthira, Osoga, and Sire are caught in this way. The bait used is Oniambo or a piece of groundnut. Long lines, Mugondo, with a large number of hooks are sometimes used. These are left in the water for some time with floats at intervals to buoy them up.

FISH USED FOR LOCAL CONSUMPTION.

As most of the fish caught by natives is not eaten fresh, but dried, the whole of the population of these locations could easily eat fish caught on the Lake shore. In fact there is no doubt that dried fish is transported and eaten by the natives very much further inland than these Lake shore locations. The whole Jaluo population of Central and South Kavirondo will eat fish if they can get it. The population is approximately as follows:—

Central Kavirondo	316,000
South Kavirondo (Luo)	180,387

The two Districts which border on the Lake shores in Nyanza Province are Central and South Kavirondo. The natives living close to the shore in both thes Districts spend a large part of their time fishing. It has been estimated that about two to three thousand in each District are more or less permanently employed in this work. They use canoes (Dholuo, Yiyi) made of rough boards sewn together with grass fibre and caulked with mud. There are probably about 1,000 canoes in each District (Central and South Kavirondo). They are propelled with single bladed paddles (Ngai).

The following are the names and population of the Locations in these two Districts which actually border on the Lake shore from the Sio River on the Uganda border on the North of the Gulf to Mohuru on the Tanganyika border on the South side:—

CENTRAL KAVIRONDO.

Name of Location.	Population.
Samia	33,000
Kadimu	6,000
Sakwa	18,000
Uyoma	10,000
Asembo	18,000
Seme	26,000
Kisumu	15,000
West Kano	19,000
Nyakach	22,000
	162,000

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434. JA-LUO FISHERWOMEN AND THEIR BASKETS

14: Johnston G-4, 5 (no date) 1904 FL11 Luo FL11

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14: Johnston G-4, 5 (no date) 1904 FL11 Luo FL11

husband and runs away, the amount which he has already paid on her behalf is returned and the marriage is broken off. If a woman finds herself unmarried after a long period, it is customary for her to go to a chief or a rich man and state that she has come to stay and cook for him. In such case she is usually taken to wife, but a very small complimentary present is paid for her. Chiefs may have from ten to forty wives. The Ja-luo are, generally speaking, very moral. They do not intermarry in

436. EMPTYING THE FISH-BASKETS (JA-LUO)

the same clan, but a man may marry the daughter of one who bears the same name as himself.

The Ja-luo believe in *a supreme God* whom they call "Chieng." This, however, is the same name as the sun. When a man comes out of his house in the morning, he spits towards the east, and in the evening he spits towards the west. If the sunset is extremely red, it is said to indicate the approaching death of an important person. They believe that after death the spirits of the departed go up to the sky. If a hailstorm occurs, no one goes to work in the fields on the following day. Shooting stars are said to be a sign of war. They believe that people can be killed by *witchcraft*, and that a wizard has only to show "medicine" to a person